

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Arthur H. Keller, May 15, 1892, with transcript

No Bellevue Hotel, Copy. Boston, Mass. May 15th. 1892. My dear sir:

I have become so much interested in Helen, and in the wonderful progress she has made that I feel impelled to write to you upon a matter which I have greatly at heart.

Helen possesses such natural capacity for the acquisition of speech, that I feel confident that she can acquire a more perfect enunciation than has heretofore been possible for a deaf child. Whether this is so or not however, she exhibits such aptitude that I am sure you will agree with me that every effort should be made to improve her articulation and render it as perfect as possible.

In order to accomplish this, it is necessary that she should have instruction of a character which her teacher is not at the present time qualified to give on account of lack of familiarity with the mechanism of speech and the methods of teaching articulation employed in the best schools of the country.

I would suggest that it would be a good plan for Miss Sullivan to visit some of the prominent schools for the deaf where speech is taught and observe the methods of instruction pursued.

My chief object in writing to you however is to make another suggestion which I think of importance in this connection.

You probably know of the existence of the American Association to Promote the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf, of which I am President. One of our main objects is to give practical instruction to teachers.

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For this purpose we hold a meeting every year which partakes largely of the nature of a summer school.

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We provide courses of lectures by leading anatomists and professors upon the anatomy of the vocal organs, and the mechanism of speech. We also provide practical courses of instruction in the methods of teaching speech to the deaf, conducted by successful and experienced teachers, together with a practice school wherein the principles taught are practically demonstrated by the actual instruction of deaf children by competent teachers.

Our Association is largely composed of teachers of the deaf, and of parents and friends of deaf children. We hope by means of our summer school to raise the level of the whole profession and thus lead to an improvement in the character and quality of the articulation taught to deaf children in America.

Our next summer meeting will be held at the Crosbyside Hotel, Lake George, N.Y. from the 29th. of June to the 9th. of July.

I think it would be of enormous benefit to Miss Sullivan, and therefore to Helen, if she could attend this meeting.

I think also that Helen's presence there would do much to promote the teaching of speech to the deaf of America. All our teachers are interested in Helen, and I am sure that if they could have the opportunity of meeting her and noting her use of speech, they would, one and all, go back to their schools with the conviction and belief that if such results can be obtained in the case of a child who has been blind as well as deaf from infancy, they can surely do more for their own pupils than they have yet accomplished.

They would also derive benefit from the presence of Miss Sullivan. By conversation with her they would gain much information that would be of value to them in their work. Miss

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Sullivan's influence for good would be greatly extended by personal contact with the chief institutions instructors of the deaf in this country.

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I have been so much impressed by these ideas that I brought the matter to the attention of the Executive Committee of our Association at a recent meeting. The Committee agreed with me so fully that I have been requested to write to you upon the subject.

On behalf of the Executive Committee allow me to extend a very cordial invitation to Helen and her teacher to attend our summer meeting as guests of the Association.

I trust you will permit us to meet their travelling and other expenses, as is our custom in the case of invited guests.

It will give me great pleasure to do everything in my power to render their visit to Lake George agreeable and profitable to them both.

With kind regards to Mrs. Keller.

Yours very sincerely, Signed, Alexander Graham Bell.